1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

THE THONGA TRIBE

1. *Geographical delimitation of the tribe.*

101 The Thonga tribe is composed of a group of Bantu peoples
131 settled on the eastern coast of South Africa, extending from the neighbourhood of St Lucia Bay (28° Lat. S.) on the Natal Coast up to the Sabie River on the north (1). Thongas are to be found therefore in four of the present South African states : in Natal (Amatongaland), the Transvaal (Leydenbourg, Zoutpansberg and Waterberg districts), in Rhodesia, and chiefly in Portuguese East Africa (Lourenço Marques, Inhambane and Mozambique Company districts). The Thongas border on the Zulus and the Swazis southwards ; westwards on the Ba-Mbayi, Ba-Lauti and other Suto-Pedi clans in the Transvaal ; northwards on the Vendas and Ba-Nyai in the Zoutpansberg and Rhodesia, and on the Ndjaos near the Sabie ; and eastwards on the Thongas near Inhambane and on the Ba-Chopi, north of the mouth of the Limpopo.

101 The tribe comprises a certain number of clans. These clans form six groups, which speak the various dialects of the Thonga language.

133 (1) There are two rivers called Sabie in the Thonga Territory ; one is the Sabie of the South, which flows in the Leydenburg district and joins the Nkomati not far from Km. 53 of the Lourenço Marques-Transvaal line, and the other, that here referred to, which comes from Rhodesia and flows into the Indian Ocean not far from the 21° lat. South.

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II. *Tribe, Groups and Clans.*

101/618 It is necessary first of all to define clearly the precise meaning of these three terms.

We reserve the term *tribe* for the totality of the Thonga nation. This word is frequently used to designate the smaller national units, which are called after some old chief whose descendants are still reigning, like Tembe, Khosa, Nkuna, etc. We prefer, for the sake of clearness to call these small units *clans*, as there is certainly a great resemblance between them and the Scottish clans. As a rule all men belonging to a clan bear the name of the old chief, who is more or less considered the ancestor of them all. In the Tembe country, most of the inhabitants will salute each other with these words: "Shawan Tembe, good morning, Tembe"! But Tembe, the name of the clan, means not only a group of people, but a certain part of the country south of Delagoa Bay. In that country men of other clans have settled. There are also sub-clans of the Tembe clan which have already adopted special salutations, because they have formed collateral branches of the big Tembe family. However the term *clan* is the best, I think, to designate this kind of national unit, as its origin is essentially familial. Now some of these clans, those which occupy the same tract of country, form *groups* because they speak the same dialect of the Thonga language.

III. *The generic Name of the Tribe.*

101/619 As we shall see, there is no true national unity amongst the Thongas (1). They are hardly conscious that they form a definite

193 (1) What orthography are we to adopt when using the Bantu proper names in the plural? Different systems are used in ethnographic books, but the following appears to me the most rational. When a Bantu proper name is used with its plural prefix, the addition of a final *s* is not justified; but in that case the prefix ought to be separated from the root by a hyphen, in order that the uninitiated reader may understand at once that he is dealing with a plural. Thus I would write: Ama-Zulu, Ba-Ronga, etc.

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101/619 nation, and therefore they possess no common name for it. The name *Thonga* (pronounce *t* + aspirated *h*, not the English *th*) was applied to them by the Zulu or Ngoni invaders, who enslaved most of their clans between 1815 and 1830. The origin of this Zulu name is probably the term *Ronga*, which means Orient (buronga = dawn) and by which the clans round Lourenço Marques used to call themselves. According to the phonetic laws of the two languages *R* in Ronga becomes *Th* when pronounced by the Zulus. (Ex. Randja, to love, in Ronga, is thanda in Zulu; raru, three, thathu.) This word Thonga became a nickname which, in the mouth of the Zulus, was almost the equivalent of slave, and they applied it to the whole Thonga stock; the appellation is not liked by the Thongas, but I know of no other which would be preferable to it.

Strange to say, the Thongas of the Northern Clans, especially those of the Bilen and Djonga groups, like to call themselves *Tjongas*, the Hlengwes *Tsongas*. This word is perhaps originally the same as Ronga and may have meant also people of the East, although the *R* of the Ronga dialect does not permute regularly into *Tj* and *Ts* in the Northern clans; but this meaning is doubtful, and has at any rate been forgotten. Another name, which is much used amongst white people to designate the Thongas, is the word *Shangaan*. Shangaan or Tshangaan was one of the surnames of Manukosi, the Zulu chief who settled on the East Coast and subjugated most of the Thongas at the time of Chaka. It is possible that this name was even older, and that it belonged to a chief who lived in the valley of the Lower Limpopo before Manukosi. At any rate, this valley was called Ka Tshangaan and its inhabitants Matshangaan. But this term was never accepted by the Ba-Ronga, who consider it as an

193 (in the singular: Mu-Ronga, Mu-Sutho), but never Ama-Zulus, Ba-Rongas. As however ordinary readers are not acquainted with Bantu grammar, I think it is more advisable to use these Bantu proper names without their prefixes, treating them as if they were English words, and, in that case it is necessary to add the final *s*, as we generally do according to the rules of European spelling. Many writers do not adopt this system in their books; but write the plural in exactly the same form as the singular, and it is therefore impossible to distinguish between the two. This may lead to confusion. I therefore propose to write: a Thonga, the Thongas, one Hlengwe, two Hlengwes, but it should be remembered that the final *s* must not be pronounced.

101 insult. It is applied in Johannesburg roughly to all the East
619 Coast "boys," even to the Ba-Chopi, who are considered by the Ba-Ronga of Delagoa Bay as much inferior to them. Its adoption would be objectionable on that account. I recognise that the word Ba-Thonga does not enjoy much more favour and is not quite satisfactory ; however considering that it means originally "people of the East" and that the tribe is indeed living in the eastern part of South Africa, it ought to be accepted in the course of time without much difficulty.

Let us remark that another tribe, quite different in language and ethnographic features, dwelling near Inhambane, quite close to our Thonga tribe, calls itself Ba-Tonga. But there is no aspirate after the *T* and this is enough to distinguish it from the Ba-Thonga.

IV. *The six Groups of the Thonga Clans.*

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187 Let us consider briefly, with the aid of the accompanying map,
131 these six main groups.

1. All round the Bay of Delagoa, we find the *Ronga group*. This word Ronga is a very old one and very convenient, as all these clans consent to be called by it. The real Rongas are, I think, the Mpfumo and the Matjolo clans, who are settled on the west of the Bay. South of the Bay is the Tembe clan and its two sub-clans, which have become independent : Matutwen and Maputju. North of Lourenço Marques are the Mabota and Mazwaya clans, the country of the latter, which extends on both sides of the estuary of the Nkomati, being called Nondwane. Further north are the two clans of Shirindja and Manyisa which form the transition to the following group. The new generation speaks a purer Ronga dialect, the old one more the Djonga.

Continuing our survey in a northerly direction, we cross two rivers : the Nkomati and the Olifant. From the Nkomati to the Olifant we meet with the Djonga group, and from the Olifant northward with the Nwalungu group. Djonga means

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101 South, Nwalungu means North. The Ba-Djonga are the clans
197 south of the Olifant, the Ba-Nwalungu north of it. Such
131 designations have therefore only a relative value and have been evidently invented by people dwelling on the borders of the Olifant. But they are used in some places, and I do not find any better ones to designate the two dialects of the Thonga spoken south and north of the river.

2. *The Djonga group* includes the Khosa (in the Khosen or Cossine country) the Rikotjo, the Shiburi and the Mathiye clans, if we go directly north. To the east of the Djonga clans proper, we find a number of clans settled on both sides of the Limpopo, in the triangle formed by the Limpopo, the Shengan and the line of the 24° parallel and calling themselves the Ba-Hlabi. They speak a dialect very similar to the Djongas. Their names are as follows, from the confluence of the Olifant and the Limpopo to the south: Mapsanganyi, Tsungu, Mavundja, Nkwinika and Makamo. The Nkuna clan was settled not far from this confluence. It migrated into the Transvaal in great numbers, together with Mavundja and other Hlabis during the wars of Manukosi.

3. *The Nwalungu group* includes two different elements: first the Ba-Loyi or Ba-ka-Baloyi, in the triangle formed by the two rivers northward of their confluence, and the Maluleke further north, extending all along the Limpopo as far as its confluence with the Lebvubye River and further along the Lebvubye itself. They occupy there a part of the Low Country of the Transvaal, being more or less mixed with the Venda and Nyai population. The Malulekes, according to the Native historians, are one half of a larger clan called the Nwanatis, whose second half is settled near the mouth of the Limpopo under the name of the Makwakwas of Khambane and Ndindane.

These three groups are to be found on the central line, on the axis of the tribe. On the west we meet with the Hlanganu group and on the east with the Bila and Hlengwe groups.

4. *The Hlanganu group* is the smallest of all, including the Nwamba clan in the plain of Delagoa Bay, and the Mabila and Hlanganu clans in the Lebombo hills. The Hlanganus overflow

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101 into the Transvaal territory and are scattered in the large desert
197 of the Low Country of the Leydenburg district, together with
131 clans of Sutho (Pedi) and Swazi (Mbayi) origin. The Hlanganu dialect is very much akin to the Djonga.

5. *The Bila group*, called after the name of Bila, the great and fruitful plain of the Lower Limpopo valley, includes the clans living on both banks of the river. They have suffered very much at the hands of the Zulu invaders who made their home in that fertile country, but their dialect has kept some very peculiar traits.

101 6. *The Hlengwe group*. In the Djonga dialect, *hlengwe* means
131 wealth. I do not know if this be the etymology of the name Hlengwe as designating all the Thonga population of the east and north-east, from the Limpopo to Inhambane and to the Sabie of the north. The name Hlengwe applies properly only to the northern part of the eastern clans. I retain it however provisionally. It seems that this group, which forms perhaps half of the tribe, includes at least three great subdivisions : 1) The *Hlengwes proper*, facing the Malulekes and the Ba-Loyi on the west and extending as far as the Sabie to the north. Their main clans are Tshauke, Mbenzane, Mavube, Magwinyane. 2) *The Ba-Tswa* (1) of Inhambane with the Hlenbengwanes, Yingwanes, Nkumbis. 3) *The Nwanatis* with the Makwakwas, Khambanes, Ndindanes, bordering on the Chopis to the north and the west.

101 Outside of the proper area of the tribe, we find *colonies of*
167 *emigrated* Thongas in many parts of the Transvaal. The largest is in the Spelonken district, north of the Zoutpansberg, where they form the majority of the population. There they were called

(1) This name Ba-Tswa, is the Hlengwe form of Ba-Tjwa, a term by which the Zulus have been commonly designated amongst the Thongas. Ba-Tjwa is probably the corresponding form for Ba-Rwa, an appellation by which the Suthos of the Zoutpansberg plains used to call the tribes of the mountains, whence comes the wind called Bu-rwa. The Ba-Rwa are properly the Bushmen, as one knows, but under that name were included Bantus of a quite different type. This shows that the Natives, in naming foreign tribes, consider the geographical relation between themselves and these tribes much more than their ethnic characteristics : so one very often meets with the word "Bakalanga" which means people of the north. The Bakalanga proper are in Rhodesia, but in Lourenço Marques the Khosa tribe is called Bakalanga.

The term Ba-Ngoni is applied to the Zulus, as well as Ba-Tjwa, but it is restricted to that clan of the Zulus which was under Manukosi.

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Ma-Gwamba by the Vendas and Bveshas who possessed the country before them. These Ma-Gwamba are made up mostly of Hlengwe, Maluleke and Djonga refugees. In the Modjadji country, we find two colonies of Ba-ka-Baloyi with their own chiefs. Near Leydsdorp, a more considerable clan, numbering about 6000, is the Nkuna clan under Muhlaba. On the Sabie of the south, in the plain of the Leydenburg district, another colony has been founded more recently, since the war of the Portuguese against Gungunyane, by the Ngonis and Bilas who did not accept the new rule. They remain under Mpisane, a near relative of the late Ngoni potentate.

In the Orichstadt valley, and in many other parts of the Leydenburg mountains, little colonies of Thongas are met with, as well as in the Waterberg district (especially near Nilstrom) and in the towns of Pretoria and Johannesburg. A good many of the thousands of Shangaanes coming every year to the mines settle down definitively in the Town Locations of these great centres.

During the last twenty years the number of these emigrants has certainly increased. It was not possible to indicate on the map all their settlements between the Hlanganu domain proper, the Drakensberg Mountains and the Olifant River. On the farms of the Zoutpansberg and Pietersburg Districts they also form a notable portion of the Native population.

V. *The numerical strength of the Thonga Tribe.*

It is very difficult to ascertain the numbers of the Thongas. The census of the Transvaal taken on the 17th of April 1904 gives 82,325 as being the total Thonga population of that colony; of these, 48,117 are located in the Zoutpansberg. This is a minimum, as it has been recognised that at least 10 % ought to be added to these figures; there were scarcely any young men in the kraals when the census was taken. Let us estimate at 100,000 the numerical strength of that part of the tribe which is located in the Transvaal.

As regards Portuguese East Africa, we find some interesting

618 175 643 movement of amalgamation would probably not have taken place, and I think we may consider the clan life, as it is still met with amongst the Rongas, (who were never subject to the Ngoni chief), as the typical Bantu political state (1).

B. THE LAUDATORY NAME OF THE CLANS AND TOTEMISM.

618 551 101 Each clan is known by the name of the old chief who is believed to have been its original ancestor. So the Nkuna clan comes from Nkuna, who lived four or five hundred years ago, and left Zululand for the Bilen country. The Mazwaya clan descends from Mazwaya, grandfather of Masinga and ancestor of all the heads of the sub-clans, Makaneta, Hlewane, etc. This name is a kind of *family name* for all the members of the clan. In the course of time, when sub-clans begin to aspire to independence, the first ancestor tends to fall into oblivion and is supplanted by the ancestor of the sub-clan. This process is easily noticeable at the present moment in Nondwane, where Mboza, for instance, calls himself a Makaneta. He says: "I am wa ka Makaneta," — "a man of the Makaneta house;" but if he wants to be more precise, he will say: "I am a Mazwaya Makaneta." — "Shibongo a shi diwi," "the family name is never eaten, it is eternal!" (Mboza.)

618 551 576 This old name is called *shibongo* from *ku bonga*, to laud, to praise. It is a *laudatory name*. It is used as such on two different occasions: 1) *When people salute each other.* A friend who meets Mboza on the road will say to him: "Shawan, Makaneta," "Good morning Makaneta!" But also: "Shawan Makhetshe!" (Makhetshe is the grandfather of Makaneta); or: "Shawan Mazwaya" or "Shawan Nwamasuluke." (Masuluke is the true father of Mboza.)

(1) The objection might be raised that, in former centuries, the celebrated Monomotapa founded a great kingdom. But what this exactly was, nobody knows. The descriptions of the chroniclers of those times are not very trustworthy, as we shall see from a quotation which will be made later on.

Gwambe and Dzabana. No special story is told of these ancestors of mankind, but their names are still used under certain circumstances. When expelling a disease, in the *hondlola* rite, the medicine man says: "Go away to Gwambe and Dzabana," an expression used concurrently with this: "Go away to Shiburi and Nkhabelane," viz., to the extremity of the land, a long way off; again, when many tales have been told and folks are going to sleep, these tales are also sent away back to Gwambe and Dzabana (p. 212). Why? Perhaps because they are the old, old people, and the tales which are so ancient belong to them! At any rate, by this kind of incantation story-tellers aim at preventing the hearers' sleep from being disturbed by the remembrance of the marvellous things they have been told. In the legends relating to old migrations the "Road of Gwambe" (1) is mentioned. When the ancient peoples passed along it, the earth was not yet solid, so they left the print of their feet, of their mortars, etc., in the rocks, where they are still to be seen on the edge of a river called Hlantsa-buhlalu. (Nyai idea? I. p. 22.)

In the Ronga clans, these two ancestors of mankind are called *Likalahumba* and *Nsilambowa*. The first name means: the one who brought a glowing cinder in a shell, viz., the originator of fire, (Compare the Hlengwe tradition, I. p. 24). Nsilambowa, the name of the woman, means the one who grinds vegetables. The first human beings, according to these names, were those who

(1) What is the connection between this *Gwambe* and the name of *Ma-Gwamba* commonly given to the Thongas of Spelonken (I. p. 19)? It is difficult to say. According to some, there is still a clan descended from Gwambe, the first man, whose chief calls himself Gwambe. The Ba-Venda, when they saw the Thonga merchants bringing their goods from Delagoa Bay or Inhambane, called them Makwapa, Balungwana ba Kwapen, the little White people from Kwapa or Gwamba country, viz., those who bring clothes, beads bought from the Whites. It seems certain that there exists a Gwamba clan somewhere in Gazaland, not far from the Chapi border. A story is told of this Gwamba chief, who sent messengers to Modjadji to obtain rain from her. On their return they refused to cooperate in gathering fuel for their fire and died on the road, where their graves are still to be seen. Other informants give a totally different version of the origin of the term Ma-Gwamba: Gwambe was a chief dwelling on the banks of the Oliphant, near the Dunduli villages; his men, while on a journey, said to the Vendas: "We people of Gwambe even accept old women," viz., if they receive us well, we call them our wives to please them! Hence the name they were given. Still other explanations might be found and I think there is no real connection between Gwambe, the first man, and the Ma-Gwamba.

then in force, as they are found almost identical amongst Semitic peoples, as shown in Leviticus. The hierarchy must have soon followed the institution of patriarchism, and of the clan. Witchcraft probably existed ; it must have been a belief of primitive humanity, as it is still present in a very similar form amongst peasants and uncultured people in civilised lands. We have the right to suppose also that astragalomancy was practised. Some features of the Thonga language show that mythological conceptions then prevailed which seem to have almost entirely disappeared at the present time (I. p. 36, II. p. 306). This period must have lasted for tens, perhaps hundreds of centuries, until the South African tribes, after endless migrations, reached their present abode, probably pushing the early occupants towards the South ; at the end of the XVth century we find the Thonga tribe located near Delagoa Bay (1).

The third period is inaugurated by the invasion by the clans mentioned in our Introduction. White men appear, trade begins, stuffs are adopted by women, the men retaining their mbaya. Iron is introduced both by these invaders and by the White whale-fishers and traders. Agriculture undergoes a new development ; so also do military tactics,

Transvaal, in the beginning of the XVIIIth century, having been introduced by the Ma-Lemba about 1750. In spite of this, the Pedis call it *khuga*, the same word as *huku* in Thonga, Ur-Bantu *kuku*. The name of the thing may have been introduced at the same time as the thing itself, and incorporated by undergoing the phonetic permutations required by the dialect (Compare *Folklore*, Sept. 1908, The Balemba).

(1) The *Lourenço Marques Guardian*, in a very favourable review of Vol. I (Oct. 7, 1912), expresses the regret that I have not dwelt at greater length on the first origin and migrations of the Thonga tribe. The writer thinks that this was formerly a much larger tribe "the basic element in the Hamitic invasion of the coastal region." As far as I know, no document exists on which evidence on such questions could be based. The Portuguese chronicles of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries describe a state of things which is quite modern compared with the first Bantu invasion of South Africa, that of the *Zimbj*, to which Masoudi's "Golden Meadows" makes an allusion, A. D. 943. When the Portuguese travellers reached the shore of Delagoa Bay, the stream of migration had already taken an Eastern or North-Eastern direction (I. p. 23). — As regards inferences drawn from the wide-spread term *Thonga* (Ronga, Tonga), I think they have very little value ; this word probably means "people of the East," as *Kalanga* means people of the North. It is applied by Natives to those tribes which dwell eastwards of them, whatever their origin may be. It is a geographical designation, like the term Orientals, and discloses nothing as regards the ethnological features of the tribes to which it is applied. In fact, as regards language, customs, folklore, there is much less affinity between our Thongas, the Tongas of Inhambane, and the Tongas of Zambesi than between them and the Zulus.

We must be content to remain ignorant of facts as to which there exists no reliable record.

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Thonga FT6
Venda FX19

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THE PLACE OF THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSVAAL SOTHO IN THE SOUTH BANTU COMPLEX

EILEEN JENSEN KRIGE

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THE Sotho of the North-Eastern Transvaal Lowveld occupy an area with fairly well-marked geographical boundaries. To the east, the Game Reserve, low-lying, unhealthy, very sparsely populated even in the old days, remains an effective barrier to contact with and further migrations from the Shangana-Tonga of Portuguese East Africa. South are the Olifants River and the towering Drakensberg range curving north-west then northwards to merge into the well-marked escarpment on the west dividing Lowveld from Highveld. On the north the Klein Letaba river roughly demarcates our area from the Venda and the Shangana-Tonga of the Knobnose Location. The Sotho-speaking Venda of Tswale and Moila, who fall well within this area, resemble in culture their Sotho-ized neighbours more than their own Venda kin to the north; but the Shangana-Tonga, who occupy most of the lower-lying eastern and north-eastern portion of the area and comprise at least one-third of its total population, are unassimilated strangers of different stock coming from the north-east and east. They have been entering since about 1840, usually in small bands, at first seeking the protection of and subjecting themselves to the Sotho owners of the land. On the arrival

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of the white man, some of their headmen were granted independent locations which have served as nuclei for the building up of more united tribal groups. (See accompanying map.)

The most important Sotho tribes of this area are the Lobedu, the Narene and the Khaha who together comprise about three-quarters of the total Sotho population.[1] The outstanding demographical feature is, however, the numerical predominance of the Lobedu who, with a population of well over 40,000, are not only the greatest tribe, but outnumber all the other Sotho-speaking tribes put together.[2] The pre-eminence and cultural influence of the Lobedu in this area does not rest solely upon their numerical preponderance. It is based largely upon the fame of their queen, Modjadji, who, as the greatest rain-maker in the Northern Transvaal, is not only regularly approached with gifts by other chiefs but also sometimes places them on the throne (*ho bea bohosi*) and is appealed to in cases of disputed succession.

This area, though forming part of a greater cultural whole including the Northern Transvaal Highveld and probably Pediland to the south, is, however, sharply characterized by distinctive features, such as ritual suicide of the chief and recognition of women as rulers in their own right, that are not found elsewhere. These are sufficient to form a fairly well-defined culture pattern, which, owing to the overwhelming numerical preponderance of the Lobedu, if for no other reason,

[1] The Sotho population of our area is made up as follows, according to van Warmelo:

Lobedu	8237 taxpayers.		
Narene	2521	,,	(Mahlo 1332, Letswalo 1189).
Khaha	1608	,,	
Thabina (Mozoboya)	1088	,,	
Phalaborwa	332	,,	
Makxoba	700	,,	
Baha Mamidja	413	,,	
Shai or Tsubye	256	,,	
Tswale	357	,,	Sotho-speaking Venda.
Moila	260	,,	

The only large tribal groups among Shangana-Tonga are

Mohlaba	2918 taxpayers.	
Nwamitwa	1347	,,

[2] The proportion is Lobedu 8237 taxpayers.
rest 7535 ,,

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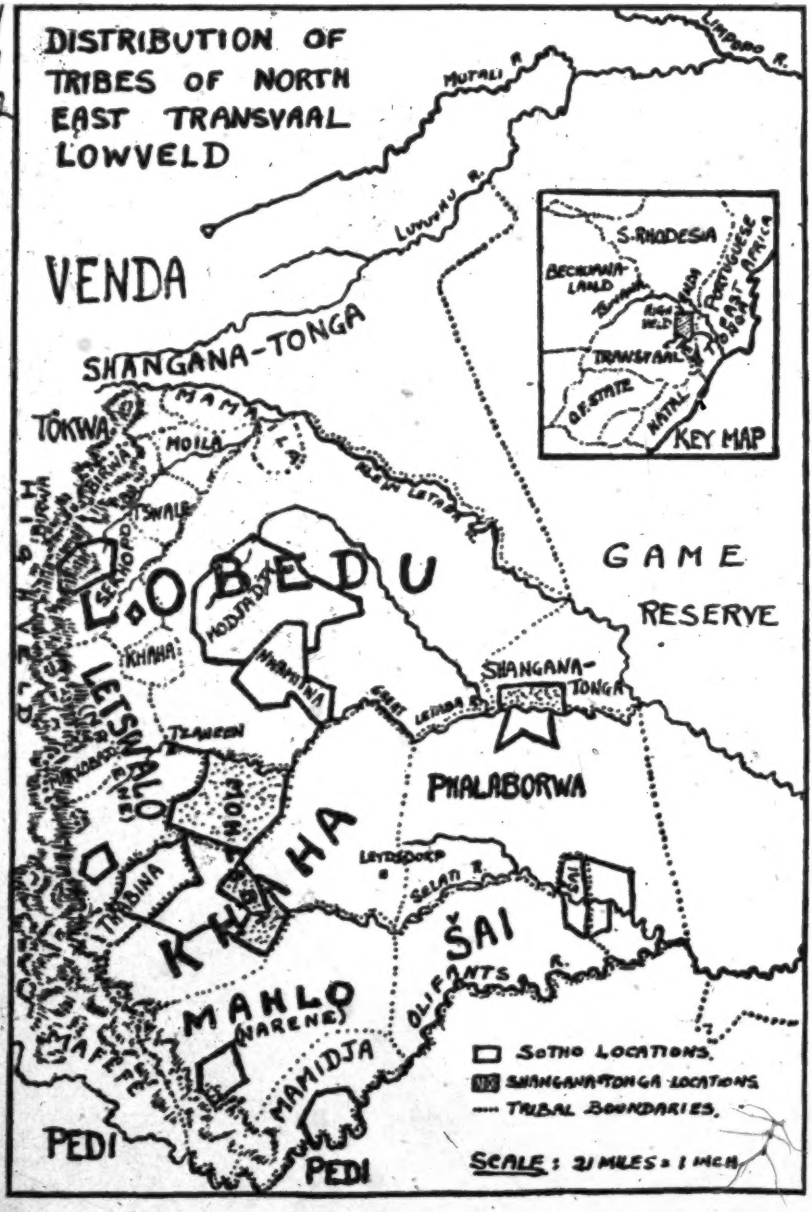

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